# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Sustainable Farming Scheme: Keeping farmers farming – response to consultation**  |
| **DATE**  | **Thursday 11 July 2024** |
| **BY** | **Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies** |

Today I am publishing the Welsh Government’s response to the feedback received to the consultation; [*Sustainable Farming Scheme: Keeping farmers farming*](https://www.gov.wales/sustainable-farming-scheme-consultation). This consultation was the latest step in developing our future agricultural support for Wales. I’d like to thank everyone who participated in the consultation and who shared their views in other ways, including through the roadshows held earlier this year.

Our ambition is for a vibrant and prosperous farming industry, and the ongoing sustainable production of food is at the core of our proposals. As part of this, we need to acknowledge the nature and climate emergency is the main risk to food production over the long term, and our natural ecosystems are the best defence we have in the adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

Since my appointment, I have been listening to the farming industry and other key stakeholders and I want to work in partnership with them to finalise the Scheme. To this end, I have already hosted two Ministerial Roundtable meetings. The purpose of the Roundtable is to further develop the partnership approach needed to finalise the design and implementation of the Scheme, building on previous phases of co-design and engagement. Whilst final decisions will be taken by Welsh Ministers, the Roundtable has an important role to play in shaping the Scheme.

Alongside this, the Carbon Sequestration Evidence Panel has met twice and will over the summer consider any further and alternative proposals to achieve additional carbon sequestration within the Universal Actions of the Scheme. I am grateful for the time and commitment that all stakeholders are providing through the Ministerial Roundtable and other supporting groups. Their input is essential in informing the decisions Welsh Ministers will ultimately need to take on the Scheme design and its delivery.

We expect to provide updates from the Ministerial Roundtable periodically through the year.

I want to reiterate that no decisions on the Scheme design have yet been made. We have heard and understood the concerns raised through this consultation process, and it is clear changes need to be made before the Scheme is ready to be introduced. And I have been clear that the Scheme will only be introduced when it is ready. This is why I have announced a new timeframe for the introduction of the Scheme.

We intend for the SFS to commence in 2026. This will be preceded by a Preparatory Phase in 2025 providing advice and support to farmers in advance of the Scheme’s introduction.

We will publish further details on the Preparatory Phase for 2025 in due course, along with details on the Basic Payment Scheme in 2025 and other schemes which will be available prior to the introduction of the SFS.

I know that this has been an unsettling time for many farmers and their families. We will continue to work at pace to finalise the Scheme so that we can provide certainty about future support as soon as possible. By working together, we can ensure a sustainable agriculture industry in Wales for generations to come.